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**Testimony of the City of New Haven
Before the Appropriations Committee**

Regarding
Judicial Department Funding

Submitted by
Althea Marshall-Brooks, Community Services Administrator
February 19, 2013

Senator Harp, Rep. Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee,

The City of New Haven is pleased to have the opportunity to comment on the Judicial Department Budget in support of the continued funding of the Youth Violence Initiative.

The Youth Violence Prevention Initiative Program funds evidenced-based strategies to address and reduce violence among young people in Hartford, Bridgeport and New Haven.

Youth violence is the second leading cause of death among 10 to 24 year olds in the United States, and is widely regarded as one of the Nation's most significant public and community health issues. In New Haven, we see this issue directly; as 15% of the 34 homicide victims (5) in 2011 were below the age of 18. The consequences of youth gun violence are complex and multifaceted; annual treatments for gunshot victims are estimated at \$100-\$125 billion per annum. The toll on communities and families is also significant: increased cost of health care, reduced workforce productivity, decreased property values and disrupted social service provisions. A review of the literature indicates a correlation between socio-economic status and increased risk factors associated with serious, violent and chronic juvenile delinquency. As risk factors increase, the likelihood of juvenile delinquency and violence increases (as well as the overall prevalence of violence). In New Haven, as in other urban communities, gun violence involving youth and young adults is concentrated in poor, primarily African American and Hispanic communities, where social and economic difficulties combine to produce severe stress.

Both the U.S Attorney General and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) have identified youth violence as a preventative public health issue and focus on the identification of modifiable risk factors, targeted program development and evaluation of program effectiveness. The CDC identifies the following risk factors for youth violence:

- Prior history of violence
- Drug, alcohol, or tobacco use Association with delinquent peers
- Poor family functioning
- Poor grades in school
- Poverty in the community

Following the recommendations of the New Haven Health Department in its 2011 report, the City's violence prevention efforts will seek to replicate "community violence prevention interventions that are currently recognized as best practices [which] focus on the knowledge, attitudes, behaviors and relationships of individuals."

The Youth Violence Prevention Program in New Haven builds upon existing programs and partnerships focusing on enhancing the capacity of existing prevention and intervention strategies to expand economic opportunities for youth and improve access to positive social activities. The program targets programming among three categories: 1) Youth Job Training and Readiness; 2) Youth Leadership, Mentorship and Mediation; 3) Pro-social interventions including but not limited to: literacy, physical health and wellness, social and emotional behavior, mental health, sexual health, homeless youth, special needs youth, youth job readiness, youth leadership, youth mentorship or youth mediation. As a complement to existing programs these programs take referrals of high risk youth from the Street Outreach Worker Program (SOWP), New Haven Police Department (NHPD) and New Haven Board of Education Guidance and Dropout Prevention and Truancy (NHBOE).

The first round of funding received from the state in February 2013 will fund ten programs to serve over 264 youth and leverage programming for an additional 420 youth. Using a Results Based Accountability Framework we anticipate demonstrating improved participant outcomes including: better attendance, improved self esteem and decreased violence or aggression.

This program has the potential to demonstrate improved outcomes for hundreds of City youth, improve our community and which is why this initiative deserves continued funding.

Thank you for your consideration.